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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINGSTON 001349

SIPDIS

WHA/CAR FOR W. BENT, INL/LP FOR K. BROWN AND N. BOZZOLO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: ANTI-CRIME PROTEST RECEIVES MIXED REACTION

REF: KINGSTON 01337

Classified By: CDA RONALD S. ROBINSON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (U) Summary: Across the island, there was mixed reaction as well as turnout to the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica's (PSOJ) May 25 call for businesses to close down in a show of solidarity against the escalating crime rate. Most private sector businesses supported the idea of reduction in crime but many doubted that this public rally would secure any real progress towards that goal. Some members of society commented in frustration that it is unfortunate that this rally was called only after a prominent member of society was killed, referring to the murders of businessmen Maurice Azan and Lloyd Phang. (Ref A) End Summary.

12. (U) In Kingston, there was a turnout of perhaps a thousand people at the May 25, Emancipation Park rally, where President of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), Beverly Lopez presented the 12-point 2005 Declaration of Emancipation Park which stated in part: "All 60 members of the House of Representatives and officers of all the political parties, must sever and publicly declare in writing by June 15, 2005, a commitment to disassociate themselves and their constituency organizations from gunmen, dismantle garrisons and disassociate themselves from any association with criminals or the acceptance of any financial or other support from criminal elements." Lopez did not elaborate on what actions would be taken if the demands were not met. The crowd composed largely of what appeared to be white-collar workers and merchants, as well as a smaller - but not insignificant number of working class and poor Jamaicans.

13. (U) In a May 25 statement in support of the PSOJ protest, the Prime Minister stated in part, "Today must mark the end of the blame game. People may have different opinions about how we have come to this and how we can improve the effectiveness of our security forces and policing capabilities. However, there can be no disagreement that the level of brutality and savagery that we see in the murders that are committed is frightening." Opposition Spokesman on National Security Derrick Smith also welcomed the demonstration, stating in Parliament on May 25 that "The organization (PSOJ) has the full support of the Opposition in their protest for bringing forcefully to government the problems of the day," and that this would show the government "that they have failed miserably in bringing crime and violence down to tolerable levels."

14. (U) Although there were hundreds that turned out to support this initiative in Kingston, the protest received mixed reactions across the island. In Negril, fewer than 50 people turned up for the planned two-hour prayer and fellowship event. In other parishes, there was no planned gathering but some key merchants reacted positively to the lockdown. There were a number of statements made to the media that this event, while encouraging, should not have taken the death of a prominent businessman to come about. There were some merchants that did not fully support the event, commenting that "nothing will come of it", but stated they felt it was their duty to close their doors for at least a few hours.

15. (SBU) Following a morning seminar on e-commerce on May 25, Econoff discussed the PSOJ initiative with several attendees of the seminar. Nadine Schroeter, Customer Relations Manager for DHL supported the initiative in general, but didn't expect any real results to come from it. She opined that the call for the politicians to cut their ties to the criminals has come too late, as the gangs have grown beyond their political connections and are self-supporting within their geographic strongholds. Stating she would support a GOJ effort to "get rid of the problem people", Schroeter lamented that, "there's no legal way to do that." Keith Collister, former President of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and prominent financier, stated he did not expect any concrete results from the PSOJ initiative, which he characterized as being driven more by an emotional reaction to several recent high-profile killings, rather than by strategic considerations.

16. (SBU) Offering a more positive outlook on the initiative, Anthony Chang, Managing Director of the Falcon Corporation, spoke strongly in support of the initiative. He said that

there are presently many small groups in Jamaica advocating for change, but that their efforts are individually weak and uncoordinated. He stated that he hopes the rally and subsequent activities organized by the PSOJ will lead to these groups coalescing into a centralized anti-crime advocacy group. In his opinion, the whole of Jamaican society and culture need to change before the crime problem can be properly or successfully addressed.

17. (SBU) Milton Samuda, a partner at the law firm of Myers, Fletcher and Gordon, was also strongly supportive of the PSOJ initiative, stating that the protest might serve as a wake-up call for Jamaican society, which has become inured to the pervasive crime and violence across the island. He opined that efforts like Operation Kingfish (Note: Operation Kingfish is the GOJ's anti-crime initiative that is based on intelligence gathering to apprehend criminals. End Note.) will not have the desired effects of reducing crime, because any leading figures that are arrested or killed will be replaced by others so long as the country's society and infrastructure support criminal enterprises. Samuda stated that extortionists have become role-models for the youth, and that the country is developing a worrisome gun culture. He would like to see the PSOJ initiative urge people into action behind the "enough is enough" bandwagon, and thereby push the GOJ to take decisive action towards reform.

18. (SBU) At the rally itself, Econoff spoke with a representative of Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ), who explained that their organization hopes to use the PSOJ initiative to publicize their own agenda. JFJ literature being distributed at the event called for the GOJ to be held accountable for its inactivity on the recommendations made in 2001 by the bipartisan National Committee on Crime and Violence. These recommendations generally cover rebuilding the moral authority of elected officials; providing more investment for community development; and enacting new legislation to deal more effectively with hardened criminals. Further discussions with the JFJ representative (who declined to give his name), revealed a general sense of dissatisfaction with the whole structure of government - a feeling that the Westminster model of government leads to a lack of accountability and an absence of real choices at election time. He also expressed frustration with the inefficient procedures and antiquated methods and technologies used by the law enforcement system - including both the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and the backlogged court system.

19. (C) Comment: Despite the exhortatory remarks expressed at the rally, the business community in Jamaica seems to have little hope that the GOJ will be spurred to any significant action by the PSOJ initiative. The tangible accomplishments they hope for center around the creation of a strong private advocacy group that can use its resources to energize a grassroots movement among the electorate. The general consensus is that the crime problem is inextricably intertwined with the current standards and attitudes of Jamaican society, and that the problem can not be dealt with except by changing social mores. End Comment.

ROBINSON